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REFORMING THE MILITARY'S FORCE MANAGEMENT
AND RETIREMENT SYSTEMS: ARE LONGER CAREERS
THE ANSWER?

A Research Paper

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Preface

This research project is my attempt, as the author, to redress what I consider to be a serious error the armed services of our country commit: separating quality field-grade officers simply because they haven't made the promotion cut for the next higher rank. Thus, we force these mature, experienced officers to make a mid-life career change at a time that their experience and leadership is sorely needed throughout the services and joint staffs. With the military experiencing a shortage of funds and new recruits, these people could continue to honorably serve their country. Therefore, this project details a draft proposal for changing Title 10 of the United States Code so that military officers can serve longer careers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my faculty advisor, Major Donald Daly for the Herculean strength and patience he so amply demonstrated during the final phases of this project. May he be given the Noble peace prize for maintaining his composure during my frequent and numerous rewrites.

I would also like to dedicate at least a portion of this project to my wife-to-be, Teresa. Claiming her assistance was an asset would be a grotesque misrepresentation; she used every opportunity to subvert, distract, and generally derail my efforts at this project. Still, she has become my inspiration in all that I do, to include this humble effort.

Abstract

The Department of Defense manages its career officer force vastly different from private industry at large. It neither hires nor fires based upon need, nor does it employ personnel for their entire useful life. Rather, it uses a combination of fifty-year-old "up or out" policies coupled with legislated quantity control of promotions and numbers in grade limitations to shape and maintain its officer corps. These methods of personnel management and retirement have sufficed for a number of years, but recent changes have rendered these policies obsolete. Mandated joint, command, staff, and education requirements for officer careers are incompatible with the current promotion progression and the length-in-service retirement restriction. The shift in demographics of the United States population, due to the aging of the baby boom generation (people born between 1946 and 1964), will present the nation's armed services with a long term force management dilemma.

This report's research methodology will review the history of military retirement and personnel management, including the background of current legislation, gathered from existing government documents, congressional records and previous theses. Additionally, this project will draw on previous government and private studies of military retirement and personnel management.

This research project recommends changing the DOPMA legislated promotion and mandatory retirement phase points in such a manner as to extend officer active duty

careers well beyond the current 20 year standard. Additionally, eliminating the “up or out” policy as well as the time-in-service limitation will base retention upon merit and ability, vice age and tenure. This will best meet the needs of the services as well as the legislated intent of Congress for greater cooperation and interoperability in joint matters.

Chapter 1

Introduction

A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom.

—Thomas Paine

This project addresses the needed reforms to the military's officer retirement and personnel management system. Specifically, it proposes that the current average active duty military career be lengthened beyond the current 20 year standard. As will be shown later, the primary argument for such a change is that it would provide military career members increased opportunity to obtain training and experience, as the current promotion phase point timeline does not allow enough opportunities for an officer to obtain the desired career breadth and depth. Additionally, the current system forces valuable individuals, at the peak of their experience and maturity, to retire just when the services need them the most to fill the shortfalls caused by the U.S. demographic shift to an older population. Detractors of this plan tend to believe in the historical adage that longer careers would result in personnel who were unfit to perform their military duties due to old age or a lack of physical health, a position that is rebutted in Chapter 3.

Overview of Current Career Lengths

The key tenet of the military retirement system and of military personnel management is that they work hand-in-hand, using the same programs for the two differing purposes. Military retirement functions to improve the efficiency of the services by influencing the decisions of military personnel about re-enlistment and retirement. Retirement functions in this manner by holding out the carrot of retirement pay at any age after at least 20 years of service as a reward for career members who served their country. This system also performs the function of personnel management; by controlling the number of military personnel and their years-of-service (YOS) distribution, it can shape the career force structure to the desired demographics. Shaping the force structure is accomplished by separating mid-career members who fail to be selected for promotion and by insuring that most career members will have to retire, or face strong incentives to retire, within a few years after reaching the 20-year mark. In fact, Defense Manpower Data Center data indicates that the mean years-of-service for career officers is slightly greater than 22 years, with 27% of officers retiring in their first year of eligibility, 50% retiring in the first four, and 62% in the first six years of eligibility.¹ This shaping of career length and force structure is enforced by Title 10 US Code (See Appendix A and B).

The historical argument for the current system has been the need to keep active duty personnel full of youth and vigor. Youthful, to keep the force young and physically fit, and vigorous, through rapid promotions to replace members who retire shortly after 20 years-of-service.

Opponents of this view would debate that the improvements in human health and longevity, as well as the changes in the nature of warfare and military institutions have

made youth and vigor less important than experience and judgment. Additionally, the national demographic shift to a more mature population at large will require the services to reflect these changes due to the reduced numbers of people available to be recruited. People older than what has been the norm for the past fifty years will have to man the guns, decks, and cockpits of the nation's military. Finally, mandated length-of-service promotion and retirement restrictions are incompatible with the educational and experience requirements of today's career officer to achieve the breath and depth of both a proficient commander of his/her service and a credible joint specialist.

Scope

This project addresses the management of active duty military officers. Fiscal savings will not be directly presented as this report concentrates on the issue of longer military careers, not cost cutting per se. The retirement system and career tracks for members of the reserve components, the National Guard and Reserves would require an entirely independent study, considering the completely different retirement criteria and promotion phase points utilized. Retirement alternatives, such as a 30 years-of-service time requirement, will not be presented due to the extreme complexity of the cascading effect upon recruitment and retention. Research into this area is voluminous, inconclusive, and highly speculative, dependent upon the environmental conditions set by the researcher. This report will focus on officer rather than enlisted personnel since officers have their careers managed by detailed statutes and congressional oversight, whereas enlisted careers are managed by service administration and instruction. Officer ranks and grades will be referred to by paygrade (see Appendix C). Additionally, esoteric proposals to career

management, such as adoption of limited career paths like the “fly-only officer,” as well as fiscal constraints of the retirement/personnel management system are beyond the scope of this paper.

Notes

¹Facsimile. Retirement Data for Officer Year Groups FY 71- FY 75. Defense Manpower Data Center, Arlington, Va.

Chapter 2

History of Officer Management

DOPMA rigidifies the already too rigid up-or-out system....it...prohibits the continuation on active duty of...highly qualified officers even when they wish to continue and the services need them...

—U.S. Senator Sam Nunn
Senate Floor Speech on S. 2424

The process of managing the officer corps has evolved over a very long period of time. Therefore, in order for the reader to appreciate the current force management and retirement laws, one must study the historical background to understand the various acts of legislation as well as the congressional intent underlying them.

Pilgrims to Abe Lincoln

Early in the history of our nation, service in the armed forces was rewarded only by death, disability, or voluntary departure, though the concept of military retirement has its roots tracing back as far as the Pilgrims, who in 1636 provided a lifetime pension for any soldier disabled in the service of the colony.¹ Additionally, the Federal Congress of 1776 passed a national pension law providing half pay for life to disabled commissioned officers.² But these were compensation only for *disabled* members of the armed forces. As a result, military officers would frequently remain on duty well past their physical and mental usefulness and there was no prescribed way for removing them by retirement or

other means. Indeed, there were documented cases of senior officers needing assistance to mount their horses.³ Congress in 1861, while conducting a study of Army retirement, commented:

The unsatisfactory personnel conditions in the Regular Army which prompted these repeated recommendations of the War Department that Congress provide some form of retirement for the Regular Army were emphasized during the field service required over the period 1812-1861. While the law provided a pension of one-half pay for disabled officers, there is no provision for compulsory separation from active service of old and disabled officers; there was no limit to active service save by dismissal or resignation of the officer. Thus, an officer could remain on active duty until death, despite incapacity due to old age, physical disability, etc. In consequence, many junior officers exercised commands in the field beyond their rank, the old and disabled officers who should have exercised these commands being left behind—often on leave—whenever field service was performed.⁴

Civil War through WW II

Legislation to amend this oversight was begun in 1861 when Congress, at the outbreak of the Civil War, passed “An Act to Improve the Efficiency of the United States Army.”⁵ The main impetus for this law (and all subsequent legislation relating to military personnel management and retirement) was the need for a ready and able officer corps in time of war. The 1861 law authorized voluntary retirement benefits for regular officers with a minimum of 40 years of service, later broadened to provide optional involuntary non-disability retirement for Navy officers after 45 years of service or at age 62.⁶ This legislation did entice some officers out of active-duty status, thus enabling younger officers to move up. The Appropriations Act of July 15, 1870, and then the Act of June 30, 1882, furthered this process by authorizing the retirement of Army and Marine officers after 30 years of service and mandating retirement for all officers at age 64, respectively.⁷

One of the more interesting pieces of legislation was the Act of March 3, 1899, which allowed certain Navy warfare specialties to request voluntary retirement regardless of rank, age, or time of service. This act enhanced promotion opportunities by providing the service the authority each fiscal year to retire applicants in order of seniority until, in conjunction with normal attrition, the required number of promotion vacancies materialized. Here was the first tie between military retirement and force management.⁸

These laws provided only Band-Aid relief for the age-in-grade dilemma; ineffective or aged officers still presented problems that would delay gearing up for any conflict in which United States forces participated.⁹ In fact, General John J. Pershing, the Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in Europe during 1917-1918, found:

...many of the division commanders relatively old and therefore unfit for physical reasons, since trench warfare presented unusual hazards to health and demanded high stamina and vigor. He ruthlessly weeded out those who did not meet his standards...¹⁰

Service-specific legislation in the early part of the century made serious inroads to solving the problem. In 1916, the Navy implemented the formula for calculating retirement pay (which remained in use until 1980), along with the first integrated “up or out” selective promotion scheme. This allowed the Secretary of the Navy to retire senior officers after reaching defined “phase point” ages, dependent upon rank. For example, a 56 year-old captain, a commander at 50, or a lieutenant commander at 45, all of whom had been passed over for promotion to the next rank, would have to be retired.¹¹

The Act of June 4, 1920 separated and classified passed-over Army officers into two categories; retained but subject to reclassification (the equivalent of today’s continued

officers) and those who were recommended for retirement, pending minimum time in service.¹²

In 1926, the Navy changed from an age-in-grade promotion/retirement system to one based upon service-in-grade. This was the first time that length of service was tied to the "up-or-out" program.¹³ Additionally, in the Act of June 23, 1938, the Navy required officer retirement for those twice passed-over for the grades of O-5 through O-7 at the retirement phase points of 26, 28, and 30 years respectively. It also authorized voluntary retirement at the 20-year point.¹⁴ This act, legislated for the Navy, later formed the nucleus for the retirement and force management systems used by the DOD today.

Post WW II to 1981

At the end of World War II, Congress and the Executive Branch under President Harry S. Truman reorganized the United States' Armed Services with the National Security Act of 1947, which created the Department of the Air Force and unified all of the services under a civilian Secretary of Defense.¹⁵ In concert with the unification of the Defense Department, Congress and the President resolved to establish a consistent officer management policy that would keep the United States officer corps ready for war. The result was the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, which incorporated all of the services' promotion and involuntary retirements systems into a single piece of legislation.¹⁶ Although amended in 1954, this act would be the services' guidance for the next 35 years.

This legislation incorporated the Navy's Act of 1938 provisions for twice passed-over officers' mandatory retirement as well as a voluntary 20 years-of-service retirement. Additionally, officers were guaranteed promotion consideration at specified career points

through the grade of O-5, setting the time in service for promotion vice advancement depending upon vacancies in the ranks above. This statute also set into law the minimum promotion opportunities, i.e. the promotion rates. Thus, the law assured a desirable distribution of experience, quality, and maturity throughout the officer ranks.¹⁷

The 1947 law, however, set ceilings on the number of regular officers each service could have. The restrictions were based on the assumption that only a small standing military force, with mainly regular officers, would be needed in the years following World War II. As it turned out the opposite was needed. To honor its worldwide commitments, the United States needed to keep a large standing force. This meant more officers than permitted by the Officer Personnel Act for the regular armed forces alone. Therefore, the services stepped up the use of Reserve officers on extended active duty (EAD), leaving them in service for full-time careers despite the fact they were limited and governed by statutes for reserve forces.¹⁸

With the larger number of regular and career Reserve officers required, the services increased the use of temporary promotions, thus institutionalizing the two-step system of temporary and permanent promotions.¹⁹ This system was used so that Regular and Reserve EAD officers competed for promotions on an equitable basis. The Regular officer received the temporary promotion in advance of his permanent promotion to the same grade; but for the Reserve officer, it was the only way he could be advanced in his active duty grade.²⁰ In other words, both the Regular and Reserve officer would compete for the next higher temporary promotion, but the Regular officer would meet a later board to be promoted, from his peers, to the permanent (i.e. Regular) grade. The increased use of temporary promotions and career reservists, in addition to creating a highly confusing

rank structure, created a problem the framers of the 1947 law did not foresee; the absence of a systematic way to authorize the numbers of officers in the senior grades which was the dilemma the law was trying to relieve in the first place. Accordingly, Congress passed the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954, which authorized the number of active-duty regular and career Reserve officers that would serve in the grades of major and above. The law authorized relatively fewer field grade officers for the seven-year-old Air Force because its officers were relatively young both in age and length of service.²¹

But the 1954 law became a problem as the Air Force officer corps matured. The low ceilings on grades O-4 and above meant many officers would be forced to leave active duty rather than continue to advance like their counterparts in the other service branches which had higher ceilings.²²

To alleviate this problem, Congress passed temporary grade relief legislation for the Air Force in 1959. Congress approved temporary grade relief for the Air Force eight more times through 1972, but then indicated that any future legislation would have to encompass a *permanent* solution. Soon after, work began on what has become the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1981 (DOPMA).²³

DOPMA

The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1981 sought to bring streamlined direction to officer promotions, retirement, and officer corps management. It's stated purpose was:

To amend Title 10, United States Code, to revise and make uniform the provisions of law relating to appointment, promotion, separation, and retirement of regular commissioned officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, to establish the grade of commodore admiral in the

Navy, to equalize the treatment of male and female commissioned officers, and for other purposes.²⁴

DOPMA accomplished its charter by making a number of changes to Title 10. First, it dictated that all services would have common rules governing promotions and separations. Next, it eliminated temporary promotion boards to better control the number and rank of officers by legislation while maintaining promotion opportunities and phase points. Third, field grade ranks would consist of all regular officers by offering active-duty Reserve members selected to O-4 regular commissions, with the total number of O-4's reduced by approximately three percent. And finally, DOPMA instituted new separation rules for officers twice failing promotion, while continuing support for the "up-or-out" policy. Under the new rules, Regular officers, passed-over for promotion, could be continued on active duty to meet their services' needs while prior laws mandated their discharge. For O-3's twice considered but not selected for promotion to O-4, they could be continued, at their service's discretion and need, for up to 20 years in service, at which time they were eligible for retirement. Passed-over O-4's mandatory retirement phase point was changed to 24 years of service, while the grades of O-5 and O-6 retained their retirement phase points of 28 and 30 years, respectively. Additionally, a 35-year maximum limit on military service for the higher grades was instituted.²⁵

DOPMA also drove the career phase points in use today. They currently are, by years from commissioning:

Table 1. DOPMA Promotion Phase Points And Percentages

Grade	DOPMA Promotion YOS Goal*/Actual AF Avg**	DOPMA Promotion Percentage Goal/AF Avg**
O-2	2-0 / 2-0	100% / 100%
O-3	4-0 / 4-0	95% / 99.6%
O-4	10-0 / 12-01	80% / 80.5%
O-5	16-0 / 16-4	70% / 70.2%
O-6	22-0 / 22-03	50% / 50.4%
O-7	25	N/A

*Years-Months

**FY93

Source: Hudson, Jeff. "Most Officers Are Promoted Late," *Air Force Times*. 23 May, 1994, 13.

DOPMA also made provisions for the selective early retirement of officers in the senior grades (O-5 and above) in the event of the need to reduce officer personnel end strength, a capability exercised during the military drawdown of the early 90's.²⁶

DOPMA made numerous changes to the armed services' retirement and personnel management systems, but there was a looming shift in paradigms with respect to the conduct of the services themselves. This shift would eventually affect officer career prerequisites with the emerging requirements for joint operations. Congress articulated and mandated their concerns in this area by passing the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.

Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986

Criticism of the National Security Act of 1947 was frequent, with service infighting ranking as a particularly recurrent problem. Following the military operation in Grenada, Senator Sam Nunn stated:

A close look at the Grenada operation can only lead to the conclusion that, despite our victory and success, despite the performance of individual troops who fought bravely, the U.S. Armed Forces have serious problems conducting joint operations.²⁷

Concerns such as these, and those about the mechanisms for military advice given to the President, resulted in the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.²⁸

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (PL 99-433), in addition to changes made at the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) level, made sweeping revisions in the identification, assignment, and promotion of personnel. Title IV of that act, Joint Officer Personnel Policy, had a dramatic impact on officer personnel management. Its intent was to bolster integration of the services' capabilities and achieve better cooperation. The Act attempted to accomplish this by establishing an occupational specialty for all service officers to be qualified in joint matters, otherwise known as the Joint Specialty Officer. Eligibility requirements for this designation include attending joint military professional education and then completing a three-year tour in an approved joint staff assignment. It also stipulated that service in a joint position was a mandatory prerequisite for promotion to general or flag officer rank, with the associated required education.²⁹ Thus, individuals identified as potential senior leaders of their service must be allotted time for Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) with subsequent time in a joint duty billet so as to qualify for consideration to senior ranks.³⁰

This chapter has shown the evolution of the armed services' officer retirement and personnel management systems from the earliest days of our nation, where the only way to depart the force was through death or disability, to the current day. Obviously, the question confronting the reader must be why address this issue now? Because the current

retirement and personnel program is incongruent with the contextual environment of today. DOPMA's promotion and retirement restrictions, Goldwater-Nichols' requirements for joint education and assignments, and the aging of America have all combined to create an untenable environment for today's career officer. The following chapter will explore these issues.

Notes

¹White, H.A. *Impact of the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 on Mandatory Retirement Policy: Time for a Change?* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1988), 10.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 20.

⁴US Department of Defense. *Fifth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC): Uniformed Services Retirement System Vol. I.* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, January 1984), VII-2.

⁵"The Law Before DOPMA," *Airman Magazine*. Sep 1981, 42.

⁶White, H.A., 11.

⁷Ibid.

⁸US Department of Defense. *Fifth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC): Supporting Annexes to the Uniformed Services Retirement System (A-G). Vol. I-A.* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, January 1984), A-3.

⁹"The Law Before DOPMA," *Airman Magazine*. Sep 1981, 42.

¹⁰Weigley, Russel F. *History of the United States Army*. New York, Macmillan, 1967. 389.

¹¹US Department of Defense. *Fifth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC): Supporting Annexes to the Uniformed Services Retirement System (A-G). Vol. I-A.* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, January 1984), A-3.

¹²White, H.A., 13.

¹³US Department of Defense. *Fifth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC): Supporting Annexes to the Uniformed Services Retirement System (A-G). Vol. I-A.* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, January 1984), A-4.

¹⁴White, H.A., 14.

¹⁵Ibid., 30

¹⁶"The Law Before DOPMA," *Airman Magazine*. Sep 1981, 42.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Air Force Regulation (AFR) No. 36-89, *Temporary Promotion of Commissioned and Warrant Officers*, 2 Sept, 1964. p. 2.

²¹"The Law Before DOPMA," *Airman Magazine*. Sep 1981, 42.

Notes

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴House, *Hearings on S. 1918, Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) before the Military Compensation Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services*. 96th Cong., 1981. 2.

²⁵“The Law Before DOPMA,” *Airman Magazine*. Sep 1981, 42.

²⁶Batezel, A.L. “It’s Called DOPMA,” *Airman Magazine*, September 1981, 38.

²⁶White, H.A., 16

²⁷Heres, Robert T. “Making Interoperability and Jointness a Way Of Life.” *Defense*

88. January/February 1988; 22.

²⁸White, H.A., 31.

²⁹Ibid. 34.

³⁰Ibid. iii.

Chapter 3

Current Problems

If indeed Americans will be living longer, then why can't they spend proportionately longer time in the labor force?

—U.S. Senate, Special Committee on Aging

The previous chapters have shown how the current retirement and personnel management system has evolved through the years into their current incarnation in the form of DOPMA and the Goldwater-Nichols Act. This chapter will demonstrate that these acts restrict the retirement and personnel management system and that the assumptions upon which the legislated acts were based are no longer valid. The chief factors driving this change are the shrinking number of resources in the demographics of the post-baby boom population, the unmanageable educational and duty requirements of career military officers, and the utility and availability of older personnel in today's military force.

Shifting Demographics

DOPMA has run into some problems since its inception sixteen years ago, not the least of which is the change in our society with respect to demographics. As the baby-boom generation ages, and with the population growth rate slowing, from 11.4 percent in the 1970's to 9.8 percent in the 1980's, the U.S. will become an increasingly middle-aged society.¹ Table 2 shows that median age in this country will increase from 32.9 in 1990 to

41.2 by 2050. Additionally, the pool of available 18-34 year old workers will shrink from 1990 through 2050 as the population of 45-64 year-olds increases, thus decreasing the available labor force for the near and long term. Current projections for labor force growth is 1.1% throughout the 1990's as compared to 2.8% in 1976 -1980 when DOPMA was conceived. This 61% drop in labor force entrants will force both industry and the military to attempt innovative and aggressive recruitment.²

Table 2. Mean Age and Population in the United States 1930-2050

Year	Mean Age	Population %	
		Aged 18-34	Aged 45-64
1930	26.5	Not Available	Not Available
1940	29.0	Not Available	Not Available
1950	30.1	Not Available	Not Available
1960	29.5	Not Available	Not Available
1970	28.1	Not Available	Not Available
1980	30.0	Not Available	Not Available
1990	32.9	28.1%	18.6 %
2000	35.8 (Projected)	23.0%	22.4 %
2010	38.2 (Projected)	23.3%	27.5%
2030	40.3 (Projected)	21.1%	23.7%
2050	41.2 (Projected)	21.2%	25.4%

Source: Murdoch, Steve H. *An America Challenged; Population Change and the Future of the United States*. Boulder, Co.: Westview Press., 1995. 38-39.

In the military, this potential manpower shortage has been masked initially by shrinking military budgets and the corresponding personnel drawdown. Estimates of the final reductions vary widely but expectations fall in the range of 28%-50% of FY89 force

structure through to the years 1996-98.³ Therefore, even with the best case estimate, there will be significantly fewer people to recruit to fill the positions our nation's services require.

This reduced pool of manpower from which to recruit is even now beginning to make itself felt. During the first quarter of fiscal 1997, the U.S. Army's percentage of high school educated new recruits fell below 90 percent for the first time since 1986, to 88 percent, 6 percent lower than the same quarter of fiscal 1996.⁴ And the Air Force has had to raise the promotion rate for captains being considered for major in June, 1997, from 80 percent to 90 percent, because of the smaller year groups after the early 1980's buildup.⁵

Additionally, if there is a sudden increase in turnover at the middle level ranks, the services must either bring replacements through the ranks or induce veterans to stay. The Air Force is currently experiencing this with its pilot corps, with fewer than half of eligible pilots accepting retention bonuses and airlines hiring 3,000 to 4,000 new pilots a year.⁶ According to Lt. Gen Michael D. McGinty, Deputy Chief of Air Force Personnel, testifying to the Senate Armed Services personnel subcommittee on March 5 1997, the number of pilots who have left has increased 40 percent over the same time last year.⁷ The absence of a ready pool of experienced replacements makes attrition costly not only in dollars but particularly in combat readiness.

In summation, the armed forces are finding it increasingly tougher to attract and retain high-quality personnel due to the shrinking pool of recruit-age people. Additionally, for the members who are retained, the requirements for promotion have become vast and burdensome.

Requirements for Promotion

Many military officers still consider attainment of general officer rank to be the ultimate in success. Officers in these ranks receive perquisites and prestige not accorded other officers. Thus, the career requirements imposed by laws and policies for selection to general officer diffuse down as criteria for the lower ranks. The problem is that so few officers actually attain general/flag officer rank (approximately .3% of any officer accession year group will ever attain this rank) that the competition is incomparably keen. The pathway to this level is littered with such a large number of prerequisites and that many highly capable and ambitious officers choose not to make the service their career, or limit themselves to 20 years and out, because of the limited opportunities for "success."⁸

Promotions throughout the ranks in the military have become increasingly difficult due to the limited amount of time available to accomplish all of the career milestones. For example, the Aviation Career Incentive Pay law requires military aviators to spend 9 out of their first 12 years and 12 of 18 years in operational flying assignments in order to receive flight pay when in nonflying jobs. Additionally, Air Force personnel are required to complete postgraduate education, intermediate service school (in-residence or correspondence), and a command staff tour prior to consideration for O-5. Current law now requires a three-year joint tour and one year of professional military education as prerequisite for promotion to general officer/flag rank. In the opinion of the author, each officer should also have at least one tour in Washington D.C. because of the importance attached to duty and experience there. Additionally, for general officer acquisition assignments, the Career Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act, 1991 established

various experience and tenure requirements, which require 10 years experience in acquisitions.⁹

Coupled with the legislated and policy requirements is the operational necessity of placing the best and brightest officers in command. Ideally, there should be sufficient time to train officers in these leadership positions as well as the opportunity to test their abilities. This is critical to identifying the individuals who will assume future leadership positions and the most responsible jobs in the service. A typical pathway to senior leadership in the Air Force would be a tour as squadron operations officer, followed by commanding officer and later group commander, all of which necessitates staying in a job only 1-2 years to complete all requirements in the typical twenty five years prior to general officer selection. The end result is that officers are continually assigned to commands, service and joint staffs, all positions of tremendous responsibility, and *undergo on-the-job training* (italics the author's) since they do not have the time in the current career paths to accomplish these tours multiple times. Additionally, these critical staffs and commands suffer from the continuous turnover of experienced and trained individuals over to personnel reporting for their first assignment to that particular type of duty.

Simply put, there is not enough time in an individual's career with the current promotion and retirement restrictions for an officer to be trained and developed to the breadth and depth desired, both as a service expert and a joint specialist.

Increased Viability of Age

Finally, because of increased life expectancy, many military members are retiring from active duty during their most productive years. At a time when life expectancy is

increasing steadily, and the health and vigor of society are improving, only .4% of the people in our armed forces are more than 50 years old.¹⁰ In 1940, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the average life expectancy in the United States was 62.9 years.¹¹ Contrast that with the fact that an officer who retires today at age 44 has a life expectancy of 78.4 years (34.4 years after military retirement).¹² And the average life expectancy will increase to over 80 years old by the year 2003.¹³

In addition to living longer, the quality of these people's lives is improving as well. This fact can be attributed to the advances in diet and nutrition, lifestyle management (with the reduced use of alcohol, tobacco, and the inclusion of exercise in daily routine), and medicine. It would be fair to assert that the today's 45 to 50 year olds are as capable, if not more, as the 35 to 40 year olds of the 40's and 50's.¹⁴ As proof of the vitality of today's 45 to 50 year olds, a 1979 Brookings Institution study stated that:

...In terms of performance in three classes of "speeded activities," research results indicate that the steepest loss as a function of age occurs in running events, which require 35 to 40% more time at age 60 than at age 20. The least loss due to age was evidenced in simple reaction time tasks, which were performed only 5% slower at age 60 than at age 20....Research results also suggest that maximal muscle strength is achieved between the ages of 25 and 30, gradually diminishing until age 50, after which a sharper decline occurs.¹⁵

Additionally, an analysis conducted for the President's Commission of Military Compensation in 1978 stated that:

Age undeniably has some effect on most, if not all, human capacities. In most instances, however, severe-deficits are not found until the sixth, seventh, and eighth decades. In studies done on work performance through the usual work lifetime (age 20 to age 60), there is little if any evidence that older workers are not capable of performing equally well in most job situations.¹⁶

Aside from improved health, fitness, and longevity, advanced technology and increased automation have reduced the strength and endurance requirements of military personnel. This is particularly true of senior officers, as they have not traditionally been required to engage in many strenuous activities. Lieutenant General Leo E. Benade, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military policy from 1966 to 1974, and a member of the Fifth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) panel, says it best:

As the nature of weaponry changes, as the nature of our armed forces changes, as the proportion of individuals in line-combat type duties continues to decrease as a percentage of the force, the concept of the need for youth and vitality, while still valid, can't be generalized anymore. You have to look at the various areas within the services. Just because you have young vigorous individuals, for example, in the infantry, doesn't necessarily mean you have to have it somewhere else.¹⁷

The recent change in the rank of Air Force flying wing commanders from colonel to brigadier general, with incumbents in their late 40's and 50's, is graphic proof that relatively older individuals, with the increased reliance upon technology and automation, can handle the rigors of military service to include the physical demands of tactical aviation, while bringing the wealth of judgment and maturity that only age and experience can provide.

Ironically, the armed forces are retiring highly experienced, competent leaders and managers at the peak of their maturity and judgment at the very time that manpower shortages are emerging as a result of the national demographic shift to an older population.

Finally, if current DOPMA mandatory retirement phase points had been in effect in 1941 when military officers were allowed to serve until age 64, many of the top commanders would have missed the war due to their age and time in service, including

General of the Army George C. Marshall, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, and General of the Army Dwight D Eisenhower. Unquestionably, after the 20-year point in the military, mental prowess and experience become preeminent over physical attributes.¹⁸

Despite these facts, the military still has retirement laws that have not substantially changed in 50 years. These laws ignore the dynamic changes in the armed forces and in the capabilities of the people themselves. The military retires its "executives" for length-of-service reasons, as opposed to value to the organization, at a time of peak maturity and experience. Having looked at the three problems the services face, the lack of new recruits and the increased promotion requirements, and the vitality of the older work force, the next chapter will explore the feasibility of extending the length of time officers can remain on active duty by changing promotion phase points, eliminating "up or out," and modifying retirement phase points to be age rather than service based.

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¹⁴Goldrich, R.A. *Military Retirement and Personnel Management: Should Active Duty Military Careers be Lengthened?* CRS Report for Congress. November, 1995. 16.

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¹⁷Benade, Lieutenant General Leo E. "Cut Retired Costs by Increasing Time in Service." *Air Force Times*, 26 September 1983.

¹⁸Lawrence, W., 35-38.

Chapter 4

Recommendations

Longer careers should be the rule rather than the exception, and up-or-out features of DOPMA should be adjusted accordingly.

—Senate Armed Services Committee

The earlier chapters showed the evolution of the military officer's personnel management and retirement systems through the numerous legislative acts to the modern day system. Those chapters also demonstrated the current difficulties with the inflexible promotion progression and mandatory retirement statutes, coupled with the post-baby boom demographic shift. The solution to these problems is relatively clear-cut: return to the past practice of allowing military personnel to serve longer. The resulting decreased recruiting and training cost coupled with increased personnel effectiveness could represent enormous savings. But the primary savings would be the enormous amount of leadership, skill, experience, and combat capability that a more mature officer corps would represent. This would provide a multiple advantage over the current system. It would first and foremost: 1) give greater time in grades to allow increased and multiple exposure to commands and staffs, 2) provide an incentive for individuals to remain in the service beyond the 20 year retirement vesting point, thus alleviating much of the personnel and experience shortfalls presently being experienced throughout the force, and 3) take advantage of the increased vitality of people in the ages of 40 through 50 years old.

Changes to the Current System

This paper does not advocate an increase to the current 20-year minimum requirement for military retirement for a number of reasons. First, the effects on future mid-career officers and recruiting would bound to be catastrophic. It would also have a negative influence for shaping the future career workforce, with a projected lower rate of mid-career reenlistment. Additionally, changing the 20-year requirement for military retirement would have to be grandfathered, i.e. it would apply to new officer accessions, therefore any benefit would be realized only after 20 to 30 years. No, the current time-in-service requirement should be retained, but treated as a threshold for retirement vesting vice being the standard for career length. The intent of this project is to solve the problems of career requirements and manpower shortages by increasing career length not by eroding retirement benefits.

It is an assumption of the author that the Title IV personnel management provisions of Goldwater-Nichols will be irrevocable. Attempts have been made to amend the joint staff requirement with little result. Rather, the simplest and most efficient way to implement the increased career length would be to make legislative changes to Title 10 of the United States Code, modifying or repealing many of DOPMA's points.

Changing Promotion Phase Points

Allowing personnel to serve longer entails more than a simple modification of the current promotion system; we would have to restructure the officer rank profile and time-in-grade requirements. These requirements would include stretching out the promotion phase points well beyond the current standard. The author suggests that promotion to pay

grades should change as follows: O-4 at 11-13 years, O-5 at 18-20, O-6 at 25-27 and O-7 after 33.¹

Changing the promotion phase points to those above would allow an increased amount of time for an officer to participate in their primary warfighting specialty for 11-13 years. As Table 1 showed (see page 12), the current promotion timeline is already not far from this goal. Promotion to O-5 at 18-20 years-of-service would allow 7 years (vice the current 4-5 years) for staff, joint, or department head tours. Delaying the O-5 promotion date would also allow passed-over individuals an opportunity to voluntary retire immediately following their last opportunity for advancement, thus sparing these individuals unneeded embarrassment.

Seven years for duties at each of the O-5 and O-6 grades adds increased opportunity for command, joint, and major command staff tours; particularly for O-6 grade, with three additional years in rank. In particular, the additional time provides an opportunity for individuals to have multiple staff and command assignments, thus further enriching the services with their experience, as well as broadening themselves.

Increasing the amount of time required for career officers to make rank may initially appear to be a disincentive for O-4's to O-6's to remain in service. However eliminating the "up or out" policy and the 35-year career limit, as outlined in the next two sections, would empower the officer to have a true military career vice an "interim" 20-year service before finding subsequent "follow-on" employment.

Eliminate "Up or Out"

In effect, current legislated statutes limit and rigidifies the current promotion system. It prohibits the continuation of highly qualified officers even when they wish to be retained

and the services need them. Nowhere is this better exemplified than with the current pilot management problem. Eliminating mandatory retirement and separation requirements would make available an incredible resource pool of personnel. Officers who have become senior O-3's, O-4's, and O-5's have already made the quality cut based upon training, performance, and promotion. There will continue to be a need for dedicated and experienced officers at the unit, staff, joint, and training center level; jobs which do not enrich promotion potential, but jobs which must be completed. Tenured field-grade officers, ideal individuals to fill those positions, should not be eliminated merely based upon time in grade. If the armed forces need these people and they wish to continue to serve, the services should be able exercise the decision to retain these valuable officers.

This is not to say these officers would not be subject to supervision, evaluation, and review. All continued officers would still meet performance standards set forth by their respective services and could be selectively retired due to inability or failure to adhere to service norms.

Eliminate 35-Year Career Limit

This option goes hand-in-hand with eliminating the "up or out" provisions of DOPMA. The DOPMA 35-year career limit has made the U.S. military a true anachronism in our country. No other industry or business mandatorily retires personnel at their peak of maturity and experience. In fact, both industry and civil service generally retire no earlier than age 60 (See Appendix D). Maximum military service limits should be based upon ability or age, as it is the most fair and commonly used standard. Again, many of the top commanders of World War II, including MacArthur, Nimitz, and Eisenhower, would not have been eligible to serve with today's 35-year service limit.

To implement these changes, 10 USC, Subtitle A II, Chapter 36 III (see Appendix B) would have to be amended, eliminating the mandatory retirement statutes for time-in-grade and time-in-service. Additionally, 10 USC, Subtitle A II, Chapter 32 III would be changed to allow the services to control the distribution of years-of-service throughout the force.

In summation, lengthening military careers by changing the promotion phase points would allow officers to obtain the command, joint, and service experience demanded of them in today's dynamic world. And eliminating the time-in-grade and time-in-service retirement statutes from Title 10 of the US Code would do away with the anachronisms of "up or out," the 35-year career ceiling, and the 20-year career standard, solving the personnel shortfalls of today and tomorrow.

Notes

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Chapter 5

Conclusions

It is inconceivable that a service member who has been screened many times during his service life is suddenly of no further value to his service simply because there are not enough promotions to go around.

—Defense Manpower Commission 1992



Figure 1. "Shoe" From *The Montgomery Advertiser*, 12 January 1988

This project has illustrated the problems with the current retirement and force management policies of the United States' armed services. As Chapter Three demonstrated, the demographic shift in the American population has left a substantially smaller pool of potential recruits to fill positions vacated by "20 years and out" military members. This difficulty of recruiting is evidenced by the lowered standards for new entrants as well as the migration of experience officers to opportunities in private industry. Filling these positions in the military is a problem today and will continue to be for the next half-century.

Additionally, the professional command, staff, and education requirements which career members have to meet within the legislated promotion phase timeline has become unmanageable. Training for weapon systems, and subsequent times to attain proficiency, have greatly increased. Increased education levels, both professional military education and civilian graduate-level, are now the norm. Service and joint level staff experience is prized equally with command assignments. Rotating personnel through all the necessary billets in the time allotted will result less in broadened officers and more in ticket-punching professionals.

Lengthening careers across the board would recognize that there have been major changes in the environment of the career military officer. First and foremost, it would allow the services to use the trained and experienced personnel in uniform *now* to fill the recruiting shortfalls of today and tomorrow, for as the average career length increases, the requirement for replacement personnel will decrease. Retaining officers who would ordinarily be separated or retired due to promotion non-selection would further help to ease the personnel shortage. Their valued expertise and judgment will always be needed at the joint, command, and unit staffs, and would release many warfighters from these assignments to remain in their primary duties. And, as information presented in this paper has shown, people are now more vigorous in their forties and early fifties than they were three or four generations ago, therefore retaining these excellent individuals would not violate the tenets of keeping the officer corps full of youth and vigor.

Longer careers would strengthen the professional capabilities of career members across the board by providing additional time and opportunities for command, staff and educational experience and seasoning. The rotation of career members from one job to

another, in an attempt to insure minimal competence in a wide variety of military tasks, could be replaced by both longer and a broader range of assignments. Career members would have more time to hone their core competencies and to obtain experience in assignments or formal education outside of their fields.

Combat readiness would improve for unit commands and joint and service staffs as longer careers become the norm. Career officers, experienced to a high level of competency, would reduce the number of individuals receiving "OJT" while performing their primary duties and thus bring their talents to the warfighting CINCs, service staffs, and combat units.

Finally, reforming the military's force management and retirement systems would enable the career military officer to have a true military *career*. The current 20 years-of-service standard, with officers retiring in their early forties, necessitates career members preparing for post-military employment at some point in their military service. The proposed changes outlined in this paper would allow officers to serve for their entire working career and concentrate on their profession: Defending the Constitution and successfully fighting our nation's wars.

Appendix A

10 USC, Subtitle A II, Chapter 32 III: Officer Strength and Distribution in Grade.

§ 523. Authorized strengths: commissioned officers on active duty in grades of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel and Navy grades of lieutenant commander, commander, and captain

•(a) •(1) Except as provided in subsection (c), of the total number of commissioned officers serving on active duty in the Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps at the end of any fiscal year (excluding officers in categories specified in subsection (b)), the number of officers who may be serving on active duty in each of the grades of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel may not, as of the end of such fiscal year, exceed a number determined in accordance with the following table:

Number of officers who may be serving on a duty in the grade of:

Total number of commissioned officers:	:Major	:Lieutenant	:Colonel
Army:	:	:	:
60,000	:11,580	:7,941	:3,080
65,000	:12,271	:8,330	:3,264
70,000	:12,963	:8,718	:3,447
75,000	:13,654	9,107	:3,631
80,000	:14,346	:9,495	:3,814
85,000	:15,037	:9,884	:3,997
90,000	:15,729	:10,272	:4,181
95,000	:16,420	:10,661	:4,364
100,000	:17,112	:11,049	:4,548
110,000	:18,495	:11,826	:4,915
120,000	:19,878	:12,603	:5,281
130,000	:21,261	:13,380	:5,648
170,000	:26,793	:16,488	:7,116
Air Force:	:	:	:

70,000	:13,530	:9,428	:3,392
75,000	:14,266	:9,801	:3,573
80,000	:15,002	:10,175	:3,754
85,000	:15,738	:10,549	:3,935
90,000	:16,474	:10,923	:4,115
95,000	:17,210	:11,297	:4,296
100,000	:17,946	:11,671	:4,477
105,000	:18,682	:12,045	:4,658
110,000	:19,418	:12,418	:4,838
115,000	:20,154	:12,792	:5,019
120,000	:20,890	:13,165	:5,200
125,000	:21,626	:13,539	:5,381

Marine Corps:	:	:	:
12,500	:2,499	:1,388	:592
15,000	:2,766	:1,483	:613
17,500	:3,085	:1,579	:633
20,000	:3,404	:1,674	:654
22,500	:3,723	:1,770	:675
25,000	:4,042	:1,865	:695

•(2) The number of officers who may be serving on active duty in each of the grades of lieutenant commander, commander, and captain may not, as of the end of such fiscal year, exceed a number determined in accordance with the following table:

Number of officers who may be serving on a duty in grade of:

Total number of commissioned officers	:Lieutenant :Commander	:Captain
Navy:	:	:
45,000	:9,124	:5,776
48,000	:9,565	:5,984
51,000	:10,006	:6,190
54,000	:10,447	:6,398
57,000	10,888	:6,606
60,000	:11,329	:6,813
63,000	:11,770	:7,020
66,000	:12,211	:7,227
70,000	:12,799	:7,504
90,000	:15,739	:8,886
		:4,013

•(3) If the total number of commissioned officers serving on active duty in an armed force is between any two consecutive figures listed in the first column of the appropriate table in paragraph (1) or (2), the corresponding authorized strengths for each of the grades shown in that table for that armed force are determined by mathematical interpolation between

the respective numbers of the two strengths. If the total number of commissioned officers serving on active duty in an armed force is greater or less than the figures listed in the first column of the appropriate table in paragraph (1) or (2), the Secretary concerned shall fix the corresponding strengths for the grades shown in that table in the same proportion as reflected in the nearest limit shown in the table.

- (b) Officers in the following categories shall be excluded in computing and determining authorized strengths under this section:

- (1) Reserve officers - •(A) on active duty for training; •(B) on active duty under section 265, 3021, 3496, 5251, 5252, 8021, or 8496 of this title or under section 708 of title 32;
- (C) on active duty under section 672

- (d) of this title in connection with organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training the reserve components; •(D) on active duty to pursue special work; •(E) ordered to active duty under section 673b of this title; or •(F) on full-time National Guard duty.

- (2) General and flag officers.
- (3) Medical officers.
- (4) Dental officers.
- (5) Warrant officers.
- (6) Retired officers on active duty under a call or order to active duty for 180 days or less.
- (7) Reserve or retired officers on active duty under section 10(b)(2) of the Military Selective Service Act (50 U.S.C. App. 460(b)(2)) for the administration of the Selective Service System.

- (c) Whenever the number of officers serving in any grade is less than the number authorized for that grade under this section, the difference between the two numbers may be applied to increase the number authorized under this section for any lower grade.
- (d) An officer may not be reduced in grade, or have his pay or allowances reduced, because of a reduction in the number of commissioned officers authorized for his grade under this section.

Appendix B

10 USC, Subtitle A II, Chapter 36 III: Failure Of Selection For Promotion And Retirement For Years Of Service.

§ 633. Retirement for years of service: regular lieutenant colonels and commanders Except an officer of the Navy designated for limited duty to whom section 5596(e) of this title applies and an officer of the Marine Corps designated for limited duty to whom section 5596(e) or section 6383 of this title applies and except as provided under section 637(b) of this title, each officer of the Regular Army, Regular Air Force, or Regular Marine Corps who holds the regular grade of lieutenant colonel, and each officer of the Regular Navy who holds the regular grade of commander, who is not on a list of officers recommended for promotion to the regular grade of colonel or captain, respectively, shall, if not earlier retired, be retired on the first day of the month after the month in which he completes 28 years of active commissioned service. During the period beginning on July 1, 1993, and ending on October 1, 1999, the preceding sentence shall not apply to an officer of the Navy designated for limited duty to whom section 6383 of this title applies.

§ 634. Retirement for years of service: regular colonels and Navy captains. Except as provided under section 637(b) of this title, each officer of the Regular Army, Regular Air Force, or Regular Marine Corps who holds the regular grade of colonel, and each officer of the Regular Navy who holds the regular grade of captain, who is not on a list of officers recommended for promotion to the regular grade of brigadier general or rear admiral (lower half), respectively, shall, if not earlier retired, be retired on the first day of the month after the month in which he completes 30 years of active commissioned service. During the period beginning on July 1, 1993, and ending on October 1, 1999, the preceding sentence shall not apply to an officer of the Regular Navy designated for limited duty to whom section 6383(a)(4) of this title applies.

Appendix C

Pay Grades and Ranks of the Services

Pay Grade	Air Force/Army/Marines	Navy
O-1	Second Lieutenant	Ensign
O-2	First Lieutenant	Lieutenant Junior Grade
O-3	Captain	Lieutenant
O-4	Major	Lieutenant Commander
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander
O-6	Colonel	Captain
O-7	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (Lower Half)
O-8	Major General	Rear Admiral (Upper Half)
O-9	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral
O-10	General	Admiral

Appendix D

Comparison Of Nondisability Retirement Systems

<u>GENERAL PROVISIONS</u>	<u>UNIFORMED SERVICES</u>	<u>CIVIL SERVICE</u>	<u>STATE OF ILLINOIS</u>	<u>POLICE & FIREMEN, ILLINOIS</u>	<u>IBM</u>	<u>EXXON</u>
<u>Normal Retirement</u> Payable when the indicated minimum age and service requirements are met	Any age and 20 years-of-service	Age 62 and 5 years-of-service	(1) Age 60 and 8 years-of-service (2) Any age & 35 years-of-service	Same as other state employees	Age 65	Age 60
<u>Early Retirement</u> Permitted when indicated minimum age and/or service requirements are met.	Not normally applicable	Age 60 & 20 years-of-service	Age 55 to 60 & 30 to 35 years-of-service	Same as other state employees	Age 55 & 15 YOS. Age 62 & 5 YOS.	Age 50 & 15 YOS. Age 62 & 5 YOS.
<u>Vesting</u> (Employee's right to share in a pension fund in the event of employment termination prior to normal retirement.)	Not applicable: Not until retirement eligibility is achieved	Yes, after 5 years service	Yes, prior to 8 YOS (only contributions). After 8 YOS, contributions + interest	Same as other state employees	Yes, 10 YOS: 100%	Yes, 10 YOS: 100%

Glossary

ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
AU	Air University
AWC	Air War College
CINC	Commander-In-Chief
DOD	Department of Defense
DOPMA	Defense Officers Personnel Management Act (of 1981)
EAD	Extended Active Duty
FY	Fiscal Year
GWN	Goldwater-Nichols
JCS	Joint Chiefs-of-Staff
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
JSO	Joint Specialty Officer
OJT	On the Job Training
PME	Professional Military Education
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USC	United States Code
YOS	Years-Of-Service

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